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## **“Zazen-shin,” Admonition Concerning Sitting-Meditation**

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### **Non-Thinking in the Solemn-Solemn State**

“Zazen-shin 坐禅箴” (“Admonition Concerning Sitting-meditation”),<sup>1</sup> a chapter of *Shôbôgenzô 正法眼蔵 (Eye-Store-house of the Right Dharma)* written by Dôgen 道元 (1200-1253), the founder of Sôtô 曹洞 Zen in Japan, begins with an exchange of dialogue between Great Master Yakusan Kôdô 薬山弘道 and a monk:

When the great master Yakusan Kôdô was sitting,  
a monk asked,

“In the solemn-solemn-state, what are you thinking of?”

The master answered,

“I am thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom.”

The monk asked, “How do you think of the-not-thinking-bottom?”

The master answered, “Non-thinking.”<sup>2</sup>

Yakusan Kôdô was sitting in the solemn-solemn state (*gotsugotsuchi* 兀兀地). A monk then asked Yakusan what he was thinking (*shiryô* 思量) of when he was sitting solemnly and still. Yakusan said that he was thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom (*fushiryôtei* 不思量底)<sup>3</sup>. The monk asked Yakusan again how he was thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom. Yakusan said it was non-thinking (*hishiryô* 非思量).

Dôgen is here saying that in solemn-sitting one should neither think nor not think in an ordinary sense. Dôgen refers to “non-thinking” as “thinking of not-thinking” which differs from ordinary thinking and/or not-thinking. If one thinks even for the sake of enlightenment, then one will not get it. It will not do if one does not think anything at all, either. At the

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<sup>1</sup> Gudo Nishijima & Chodo Cross’s translation for *zazen-shin* is “a needle for zazen.” They explain the meaning of *shin*:

*Shin* means a bamboo needle that was used for acupuncture in ancient China. So *shin* means a method of healing body and mind, and the word came to be used for a maxim that has the power to cure a human being of physical and mental discomfort. Subsequently, the word *shin* was used to describe short verses useful in teaching the important points of a method of training.

Gudo Nishijima & Chodo Cross, *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo*, Book 2 (London: Windbell Publications Ltd., 1996) p. 91.

“Zazen-shin” was recorded, according to the colophon, in the spring of 1242 at Kôshôhînjinji temple in Fukakusa, Kyoto, and was addressed by Dôgen to his disciples at the end of the following year after he moved to Echizen.

<sup>2</sup> *Dôgen-zenji zenshû*, vol. I, ed. Okubo Dôshû (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1969), p. 90. Hereafter abbreviated *DZZ*.

<sup>3</sup> Nishijima & Cross’s translation for *fushiryôtei* is “the concrete state of not thinking,” p. 91.

moment of attaining “non-thinking,” however, only solemn-sitting becomes present, illuminates itself and continues to manifest itself. Or at the moment of attaining “non-thinking” in “thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom” with the whole body and the whole universe, just the solemn-solemn-state of sitting manifests as enlightenment.

In this work, Dôgen admonishes his followers concerning proper practice of *zazen* 坐禪 or sitting-meditation, stressing that *zazen* is the essential-instrument (*yôki* 要機) or instrumental-essence (*kiyô* 機要), which has been correctly transmitted through the Patriarchs directly from Śâkyamuni the Buddha 釈迦牟尼仏. For Dôgen, however, *zazen* is not merely a means by which enlightenment is attained. Dôgen maintains that to the extent that one is in sitting-meditation, which is itself an expression or manifestation of enlightenment, one is the sitting-Buddha (*zabutsu* 坐仏), being enlightened.

### Polishing a Tile

In order to work out the relationship between sitting-meditation and the sitting-Buddha, Dôgen presents a dialogue between Zen masters Daijaku of Kôzei 江西大寂 and Daie of Nangaku 南岳大慧. In particular, in the dialogue concerning “polishing-a-tile and becoming-a-mirror,” Dôgen illustrates how sitting-meditation is equivalent to the sitting-Buddha.<sup>4</sup> In this dialogue, when Nangaku took up a tile and put it against a stone, and polished it, Daijaku asked, “Master, what are you doing?” Nangaku then said, “I am polishing it to make-a-mirror (*sakyô* 作鏡).” Daijaku asked again, “By polishing a tile, how can you get a mirror?” Nangaku then answered, “In sitting-meditation, how can you make-the-Buddha (*sabutsu* 作仏)?”<sup>5</sup>

A tile is a tile, not a mirror. In a strict sense, a tile never becomes a mirror. Similarly, according to what most people understand by the terms, a person is a person, not a Buddha. A person cannot become a Buddha like a tile cannot turn into a mirror. Just as one cannot make a tile a mirror no matter how hard one polishes it, one cannot become a Buddha by practicing *zazen* or sitting-meditation hard. Dôgen here suggests, in his elaboration of the dialogue, that one is not able to make a mirror by means of polishing a tile. Dôgen is suggesting that the relationship between a tile and a mirror is the same as that of a person and a Buddha.

In enlightenment, one sees a real mirror in the very act of “polishing a tile” itself. Dôgen understands that an ordinary person who cannot comprehend this does not see a real mirror, since such a person is limited by his or her common sense about the impossibility of the transformation of a tile into a mirror. Dôgen says, “Know indeed that when you investigate as prescribed by the way of following, you negotiate the way through sitting-meditation. The manifest point lies in the practicing-Buddha without seeking the making-Buddha. Since the practicing-Buddha is no longer the making-Buddha.” He means that one does not become a Buddha as a result of practice. But the practicing-Buddha (*gyôbutsu* 行仏) itself is the Buddha. Dôgen says that this has been handed down from Śâkyamuni the Buddha or from time immemorial through the one-to-one transmission of the Patriarchs.<sup>6</sup>

Kôzei then says, “*zusabutsu* 図作仏” or “Striving-to-make-the-Buddha.” Dôgen expounds Kôzei’s saying. Dôgen questions if “being made to make-the-Buddha by the

<sup>4</sup> Dôgen also gives the same account at the end of “Kokyô 古鏡.” *DZZ*, 1, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>6</sup> Dogen says, “Yakusan’s single transmission of this is already the thirty-sixth generation, directly from Sakyamuni the Buddha. In tracing upward from Yakusan, we find Sakyamuni the Buddha thirty-six generations previously. There has thus been correct transmission of thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom [between Sakyamuni and Yakusan].” *Ibid*, p. 91.

Buddha is the making-Buddha.” Is “the Buddha’s manifesting in one phase or two phases” “the making-Buddha?” “Is the striving-to-make-the-Buddha casting-off, and is it the striving-to-make-the-Buddha that has been cast-off?” Dogen continues to ask if “being continuously entangled with this striving is striving-to make-the-Buddha?” as “there are many instances of the making-Buddha.”<sup>7</sup> Dôgen then says:

Know indeed that what Kosei is saying is that sitting-meditation is unfailingly striving-to-make-the-Buddha, and that sitting-meditation is unfailingly striving of the making-Buddha. Striving can be before the making-Buddha, or after the making-Buddha, or at this very moment of the making-Buddha. The question is how many making-the-Buddhas this one striving entangles. This entanglement gets twisted with further entanglement. At this moment, each and every entanglement of the exhausted making-Buddha, unfailingly, is all together each and every striving, which shows itself, of the exhausted making-Buddha. You must not evade a striving. When you evade a striving, you lose body and life. When you lose your body and life, it is entanglement of a striving.<sup>8</sup>

Dôgen says that enlightenment of “casting-off-body-mind” (*shinjin-datsuraku* 身心脱落) cannot be attained without sitting. But simply sitting quietly does not necessarily guarantee that a man will attain enlightenment. Dôgen insists that “though there is a-person-trying-making-the-Buddha, every person is not making-the-Buddha. A Buddha is not every person. Since every Buddha is not simply every person, a person is not always a Buddha. A Buddha is not always a person. The sitting-Buddha is also like this.”<sup>9</sup> One thus needs to practice (*kufû* 工夫) in order to negotiate the way (*bendô* 弁道) of attaining enlightenment. Dôgen says that when one investigates as prescribed by the teaching, one negotiates the way through sitting-meditation, not through a simple sitting. One practices (sits) and simultaneously becomes the Buddha without seeking to make-the-Buddha in *zazen*. When in sitting-meditation one reaches the state where one is no longer practicing for the sake of enlightenment, one casts off one’s body-mind, becomes totally free and experiences things as present (*genjô* 現成) before him. But without any negotiation of the way—entanglement—, even if one sits, one is merely sitting still (*zaga* 坐臥). Though sitting still resembles sitting-meditation in form, it is not sitting-meditation, the essential instrument of enlightenment. While *zazen* penetrates to the sitting-Buddha, *zaga* or sitting still in an ordinary sense without understanding the principle is mere sitting. In this ordinary sitting, a person is a person, not a Buddha, no matter how hard he or she sits: a tile never becomes a mirror without understanding the principle of polishing a tile.

It is not that one achieves enlightenment as a result of striving hard. Enlightenment does not take place following practice, but enlightenment and practice are the same, a doctrine called *shushô-ittô* 修証一等. Thus, one is enlightened just as one sits in the solemn-solemn-state in *zazen*, and one is not yet enlightened as long as one sits in order to attain enlightenment. As long as one is stuck with questioning how one can make a mirror by polishing a tile, one still does not understand the principle of polishing or practice of enlightenment. In realization, one is able to see “swiftly” (*sumiyaka* すみやか) that a tile becomes a mirror or a man becomes the Buddha. At this moment, things become present and crystal clear in one’s seated-meditation just as a clean mirror reflects things clearly.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

### Whipping an Ox-Cart

When one casts off one's body-mind, one escapes from a little, fixed and bound world. One no longer gets stuck within a limited or delimited view and is able to see and experience things freely. In order to show a variety of different interpretations of any incident and to break our conventional views, Dôgen presents and elaborates several accounts. Dôgen first introduces Nangaku's saying which states "when a person is riding in an ox-cart, if the cart does not go, then is it right to whip the ox?"<sup>10</sup> In a conventional sense, no one thinks that one should whip the cart when the ox-cart does not go. In order to understand the relationship between sitting-meditation and the sitting-Buddha, however, Dôgen is suggesting that one should understand the meaning of this question and broaden one's view by becoming flexible to the unlimited possibilities of seeing the way things are.

Dôgen tells us to investigate what is meant by the cart's going and the cart's not-going. Regarding "should he whip the cart or the ox?" Dôgen says that in the ordinary world there is no principle of whipping-the-cart, but that in the way of Buddhism this whipping-the-cart is to be investigated. Dôgen then tells us to think whether whipping-the-cart is the same as whipping-the-ox or not. Referring to whipping-the-ox, Dôgen further says that one:

... must further seek for and learn in practice whip-the-ox in the Buddha way. Is it an-ox-whipping a water buffalo, or is it an-ox-whipping an iron-bull, or is it an-ox-whipping a clay-ox? Should we whip with a whip?" Should we whip with the whole world? Should we whip with the whole mind? Should we whip until marrow gushes out? Should we whip with our fist? There should be a fist-whipping-a-fist. There should be an ox-whipping-an-ox.<sup>11</sup>

By presenting the account of whether one should whip the ox or the cart and of how one should whip the ox, Dôgen tries to make us leave our common sense views and our conventional attitudes. Dôgen seems to be suggesting that, otherwise, we would not understand the principle of polishing a tile: a tile that we polish never becomes a mirror.

Dôgen continues to break down our conventional views giving another account of water's flowing. According to our view, the river does not move but water flows and goes. Dôgen, however, suggests that it is possible to see that water is not going. To a person who stands at the bank and watches the river, water is flowing while the river remains there. But to water itself, the river is the one that is actually moving, if we see water as the center of the whole world. Dôgen gives a similar example in "Genjôkôan 現成公案" ("Things as They Are, Manifested in the Present"). He says, "If one looks around at the shore when he is traveling in a boat, he mistakenly sees that the shore is moving. But if one closely keeps one's eyes on the boat, one comes to know that the boat is going forward."<sup>12</sup> Although Dôgen here rather affirms a conventional view, he is suggesting that things look different or the principle of things changes depending on how and under what condition one sees them. Dôgen says again:

For example, when one boards a boat, sailing in the wide open sea, and looks around, he sees the ocean only as round. He does not see any other aspect of it. However, this great ocean is neither round nor square. Its potential possibility and forms of ocean cannot be exhausted. It is like a palace. It is like a bead ornament. Only to one's eyes, one sees it as round for the time being.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

### Fish and Birds

Dôgen, toward the end of “Zazen-shin,” provides other accounts of fish and birds, elaborating Wanshi’s *Zazen-shin*. Dôgen says, “No matter how much distance swimming takes place, this is un-measurable, un-limited. There is no shore for measuring, no sky for floating, or no bottom for sinking. Therefore, there is no one who can measure it. If we try to discuss measuring, there is only *the water clean through to the bottom*.”<sup>14</sup> Dôgen is here saying that no matter how far a fish goes, we cannot measure the distance in an ultimate sense, since there is no absolute standard of measuring. Dôgen would say that even a fish goes a mile and we say it swims a mile from place A to place B, this is only one way of measuring distance in our system and rule. The earth is moving and the whole universe is also moving. Therefore, we cannot know accurately how far a fish goes in an absolute sense. Through this understanding, however, one further comes to realize that wherever a fish goes, it is a place of profound and unlimited space. Dôgen then refers to a bird and the sky:

What it means by *the sky is extensive* is not that it is suspended in the heaven.

The sky which is suspended in the heaven is not *the extensive sky*, much less whatever is suspended in here and there, that is not *the extensive sky*. That which has no front-or-back regardless of hidden or revealed is *the extensive sky*.

When birds fly in this sky, flying in the sky is one Dharma way. The action of flying the sky cannot be measured.<sup>15</sup>

Dôgen continues to say that “the flying the sky is the whole world, since the whole world is the flying the sky.”<sup>16</sup> In this understanding of the extensive and unbound sky, it can be further said that “when the birds fly away, the sky also flies away.”<sup>17</sup> Wherever the birds go is always the unlimited and extensive sky, and the birds are fully exhausting their flying. At every moment only flying-solemnly is spontaneously taking place in their unbound space. Similarly, if a person sits-solemnly in his or her extensive space, he or she will be the Buddha, a free person, as only sitting-solemnly continues on to manifest itself.

Dôgen’s message in “Zazen-shin” is that *zazen* or sitting-meditation is the essential instrument or the instrumental essence of the Buddha and Patriarchs. *Zazen* is not, however, a means for the attainment of enlightenment, but is the practice of enlightenment itself. In order to attain this, one must negotiate the way through *zazen* as the practice of enlightenment. One just has to sit-solemnly without questioning how one can attain it, since the moment one questions, one separates oneself from actual experience. Enlightenment takes place just in one’s practicing itself. There still remains the question, however, as to how one can then reach a state of practice equal to enlightenments as one’s intention for enlightenment is regarded as an obstacle to real experience and is to be rejected. Although this question can be raised and there seems to be a dilemma, this is precisely the type of question that Dôgen wants us to surmount as a condition of final realization. And Dôgen’s message is presented on the basis of one’s actually being engaged in the practice of sitting-meditation: this type of question cannot be answered by the intellectual pursuit of enlightenment. Enlightenment is revealed only in one’s actual practice.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

**“Zazen-shin,”**  
**“Admonition Concerning Sitting-meditation”**  
 (DZZ, I, pp. 90-101)

**Zazen-shin**

at Kannon-dôri Kôshô-hôrin-ji temple

When the great master Yakusan Kôdô was sitting, a monk asked, “In the solemn-solemn-state, what are you thinking of?” The master answered, “I am thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom.” The monk asked, “How do you think of the-not-thinking-bottom?” The master answered, “Non-thinking.”

You must authenticate such words of the great master and learn in practice solemn-sitting. You must correctly transmit solemn-sitting. This is the investigation of solemn-sitting, transmitted in the Buddha-way. Yakusan is not the only person referring to thinking in the solemn-solemn-state, but his saying is one example; that is, thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom. Thinking manifests as skin, flesh, bone, and marrow, and the-not-thinking-bottom manifests skin, flesh, bone, and marrow.

The monk said, “How do you think of the-not-thinking-bottom?” The-not-thinking-bottom is indeed ancient; yet the thing is how then one thinks of it? How can one say that there is no thinking in the solemn-solemn-state? How can it be possible that being beyond the solemn-solemn-state can be penetrated? Unless one is a fool who deprecates things that are near, anyone has an ability of questioning the solemn-solemn-state and thinking of it.

The great master answered, “Non-thinking.” That is, although it is crystal-clear to use non-thinking, non-thinking is certainly used as long as the-not-thinking-bottom is thought of. There is someone in non-thinking, and someone maintains and sustains I. Although “I” is the solemn-solemn-state, it is not just thinking, but raises the head of the solemn-solemn-state. Even though the solemn-solemn-state is the solemn-solemn-state, how can the solemn-solemn-state think of the solemn-solemn-state?

Therefore, the solemn-solemn-state is not a measure of the Buddha, or of the Dharma, or of enlightenment, or of comprehension. Yakusan’s single transmission of this is already the thirty-sixth generation, directly from Śâkyamuni the Buddha. In tracing upward from Yakusan, we find Śâkyamuni the Buddha thirty-six generations previously. There has thus been correct transmission of thinking of the-not-thinking-bottom [between Śâkyamuni and Yakusan].

However, recently foolish, careless fellows said, “In practicing sitting-meditation, if one comes to attain no anxiety in mind, then it is a peaceful state.” This view does not measure up to the scholar of *Hînayâna* and is inferior even to *manas* and *deva yâna*. How can such a fellow be called a person who is following the Buddha-Dharma? In the present great Sung dynasty, there are many such practicers. It is very sad to say that the way of the founder has been dilapidated.

There are some people who say, “Negotiating the way through sitting-meditation is the essential-instrument for beginners and late learners, and it is not necessarily the Buddhas’ and Patriarchs’ acts. Walking too is meditation and sitting too is meditation; in speaking, keeping silent, moving and, being still, the body is peaceful. One should not be concerned in this [sitting-meditation] practice only.” Those who claim to be a branch of the Rinzai school mostly have this view. Since the transmission of the true life of the Buddha-Dharma has been negligent, they claim such a thing. What is a beginner? Is there anyone who is not a beginner? Where do they locate a beginner?

Know indeed that when we investigate as prescribed by the way of following, we negotiate the way through sitting-meditation. The manifest point lies in the practicing-Buddha

without seeking the making-Buddha. Since the practicing-Buddha is no longer the making-Buddha, *kôan* manifests in the present. The embodying-Buddha is no longer the making-Buddha. If we break out of the basket, the sitting-Buddha no longer prevents us from the making-Buddha. Just at this very moment, from time immemorial to now there has existed the energy of entering into [the world of] Buddha and [that of] demons. Going forward or backward, there is an ample amount of filling ditches and valleys.

The Zen master Daijaku of Kôzei in passing learned in practice under the Zen master Daie of Nangaku. Ever since he intimately received the heart-seal of sitting-meditation, he had always been sitting. Nangaku one time went to Daijaku and asked, “Most virtuous one! What do you strive for by sitting-meditation?”

This question should be calmly worked on and investigated. That is: is there further striving beyond sitting-meditation, is there a further path, which should be striven for outside sitting-meditation, or should everything not be striven for? Should it be asked what kind of striving becomes present at the time of sitting-meditation? It should be practiced in detail. Instead of loving a carved-dragon, one should love a real dragon. One should learn that both the carved-dragon and the real dragon have the ability to summon clouds and compel them to rain. One should not think that distant things are valuable or distant things are lowly. One should become familiar with, and let ripen, distant things. One should not think that near things are lowly or near things are valuable. One should become familiar with, and let ripen, near things. One should not think too little of eyes nor think too much of eyes. One should not think too much of ears nor think too little of ears. One should make one’s ears and eyes sharp and clear.

Kôzei said, “Striving-to-make-the Buddha.”

This saying should be clearly understood and realized. What should he mean by saying the making-Buddha? Is he saying that being made to make-the-Buddha by the Buddha is the making-Buddha? Is he saying that making-the-Buddha the Buddha is the making-Buddha? Is he saying that the Buddha’s manifesting in one phase or two phases is the making-Buddha? Is the striving-to-make-the-Buddha casting-off, and is it the striving-to-make-the-Buddha that has been cast-off? Although there are many instances of the making-Buddha, is he saying that being continuously entangled with this striving is striving-to-make-the-Buddha?

Know indeed that what Daijaku is saying is that sitting-meditation is unfailingly striving-to-make-the-Buddha, and that sitting-meditation is unfailingly striving of the making-Buddha. Striving can be before the making-Buddha, or after the making-Buddha, or at this very moment of the making-Buddha. The question is how many making-the-Buddhas this one striving entangles. This entanglement gets twisted with further entanglement. At this moment, each and every entanglement of the exhausted making-Buddha, unfailingly, is all together each and every striving, which shows itself, of the exhausted making-Buddha. You must not evade a striving. When you evade a striving, you lose body and life. When you lose your body and life, it is entanglement of a striving.

Kôzei then takes up a tile, puts it against a stone, and polishes it. Taijaku finally asks, “Master, what are you doing?”

Indeed, who could not see this as polishing-a-tile, who could see this as polishing-a-tile? However, polishing-a-tile was thus questioned—what are you doing? What-are-you-doing is certainly polishing-a-tile. Although this land and the other land are different, there is a never-ending doctrine of polishing-a-tile. You should not only be completely convinced that what you see is your view, but you should understand that there is a doctrine to be learned in practice in every operation.

Know indeed! Just as you do not know the Buddha, though you see the Buddha, and

cannot comprehend it, so also you do not know water though you see it, nor do you know a mountain though you see it. The hasty conclusion that there is no further way to penetration of every dharma before our eyes is not the study of Buddhism.

Nangaku said, "I am polishing it to make-a-mirror."

The point of these words is to be made clear. In polishing-to-make-a-mirror, there is certainly a reason. There is a *kôan* of becoming present, and it is not an empty provision. Although a tile is a tile and a mirror is a mirror, in investigating to the utmost of one's power the principle of polishing, you must know that there are many indications. The permanent mirror and the clear mirror are mirrored out of polishing-a-tile. One who does not know that various mirrors are derived from polishing-a-tile, does not have the words of the Buddha and Patriarchs, does not have the opening mouth of the Buddha and Patriarchs, and does not see and hear the breathing of the Buddha and Patriarchs.

Daijaku said, "By polishing a tile, how can you get a mirror?"

Although someone who is good at polishing-a-tile indeed does not use other's force, polishing-the-tile is not becoming-a-mirror. Even though becoming-a-mirror is that, [a tile] swiftly becomes [a mirror in polishing-a-tile].

Nangaku said, "In sitting-meditation, how can you make-the-Buddha?"

It is clearly known. There is a principle to the effect that sitting-meditation does not wait for making-the-Buddha. The doctrine that making-the-Buddha has nothing to do with sitting-meditation is not hidden.

Daijaku said, "What should I do here and now?" Although these words sound like the immediate question now, they also inquire about the other question here. For example, you must know the occasion when an intimate friend meets an intimate friend: one who is an intimate friend of mine is an intimate friend of his [as if sitting-meditation met making-the-Buddha]. What-should-I-do-here-and-now?—that is the simultaneous manifestation [of the two].

Nangaku said, "When a person is riding in an ox-cart, if the cart does not go, then is it right to whip the cart or is it right to whip the ox?"

In saying if-the-cart-does-not-go, what does it mean by the-cart-goes? Or what does it mean by the-cart-does-not-go? For instance, is water-flowing the-cart-goes? Is water-not-flowing the-cart-going? Flowing can be said as not-going of water. Going of water also can be not flowing. Therefore, in investigating the words of if-the-cart-does-not-go, you must follow that there is also not-going, you must follow that there is also no not-going, because it is [each] time. The words of if-not-going do not merely refer to not-going. In saying that "is it right to whip the cart or is it right to whip the ox?" should there be whipping-the-cart as well as whipping-the-ox? Are whip-the-cart and whip-the-ox the same? Or are they not the same? There is no principle of whip-the-cart in the ordinary world. Although there is no principle of whip-the-cart to ordinary people, we know that there is a principle of whip-the-cart in the way of the Buddha, which is eye of learning in practice. Even though we learn that there is a principle of whip-the-cart, [it is] not the same as whip-the-ox. Investigating in detail, we must practice it. Although the principle of whip-the-ox is common in our world, we must further seek for and learn in practice whip-the-ox in the Buddha way. Is it an-ox-whipping a water buffalo, or is it an-ox-whipping an iron-bull, or is it an-ox-whipping a clay-ox? Should we whip with a whip?" Should we whip with the whole world? Should we whip with the whole mind? Should we whip until marrow gushes out? Should we whip with our fist? There should be a fist-whipping-a-fist. There should be an ox-whipping-an-ox.

Daijaku did not answer; and we should not miss a chance carelessly. There is the fact that one gains a jewel by throwing away a tile. There is the fact that one shifts one's face by



turning one’s head. We should not plunder this not-answering.

Nangaku again, expounding, said, “You learn sitting-meditation for the sake of learning the sitting-Buddha.”

In investigating these words, we should understand the essential-instrument of the Patriarchs. We did not know what that which is learning-sitting-meditation is, but we have understood [that it is] learning-the-sitting-Buddha. Unless one is a truly legitimate descendant, how could we say that learning-sitting-meditation is learning-the-sitting-Buddha? Know indeed! A beginner’s sitting-meditation is the initial sitting-meditation. The initial sitting-meditation is the initial sitting-Buddha.

In understanding sitting-meditation, [Nangaku] said, “If you learn sitting-meditation, then meditation is not sitting-lying.”

What he means by his saying is that sitting-meditation is sitting-meditation, not sitting-lying. Ever since it was singly transmitted that [sitting-meditation] is not sitting-lying, unlimited [efforts of] sitting-lying are ourself, [which is sitting-meditation]. Why should we inquire about close and distant blood lines? Why should we discuss delusion and enlightenment? Who need to seek for eradication through wisdom?

Nangaku said, “If you learn the sitting-Buddha, the Buddha is a non-fixed-form.”

Referring to [Nangaku’s] words, [the idea] is as follows. The fact that the sitting-Buddha manifests as one Buddha and a next Buddha is because it is adorned with the non-fixed-form. What he says by the Buddha-is-non-fixed-form refers to the Buddha-form. Since it is the Buddha of the non-fixed-form, [the form of] the sitting-Buddha can hardly be avoided. Therefore, since it is the adornment of the Buddha-is-non-fixed-form, if-you-learn-the-sitting-meditation is the sitting-Buddha. Who could, in the non-abiding-Dharma, select whether it is not the Buddha or the Buddha? It is because selection has already been cast-off, it is the sitting-Buddha.

Nangaku said, “If you do the sitting-Buddha, which is killing-the-Buddha.”

Namely, in investigating further the sitting-Buddha, there is a merit of killing-the-Buddha. The very moment of the sitting-Buddha is killing-the-Buddha. In looking for the phases and light of killing-the-Buddha, the sitting-Buddha is always present. Even though the word killing is used similarly by an ordinary person, it should not be solely equal to that of an ordinary person. We should also investigate what kinds of shapes and steps the sitting-Buddha’s killing-the-Buddha has. In working hard to understand that the Buddha’s merit already includes killing-the-Buddha, we should learn in practice our killing-a-person and not-yet-killing-a-person.

“If you are attached to the sitting-form, then you never reach this principle.”

This being-attached-to-the-sitting-form means to discard the sitting-form and to come in contact with the sitting-form. This principle shows that when we have already practiced sitting-Buddha, we do not obtain not-attached-to-the-sitting-form. Since we do not obtain not-attached-to-the-sitting-form, though being-attached-to-the-sitting-form is crystal clear, we never-reach-this-principle. Practicing like this is called casting-off-body-and-mind. This cannot be said to those who have never sat before. It is present at the very-sitting-time, with the very-sitting-person, with the very-sitting-Buddha and with following-the-sitting-Buddha. But a person’s sitting in terms of mere sitting-lying is not this very-sitting-Buddha. Although a person-sitting appears to resemble the sitting-Buddha and the Buddha-sitting, it is like an example of a-person-trying-making-the-Buddha or a-making-the-Buddha-person. Though there is a-person-trying-making-the-Buddha, every person is not making-the-Buddha. A Buddha is not every person. Since every Buddha is not simply every person, a person is not always a Buddha. A Buddha is not always a person. The sitting-Buddha is also like this.

The excellence and splendor of Nangaku and Kôzei, master and disciple, are like this. The sitting-Buddha authenticates making-the-Buddha, which is [the claim of] Kôzei. It is Nangaku who shows the sitting-Buddha for the sake of making-the-Buddha. In Nangaku's understanding there is such a practice. In Yüeh-shan's understanding there is the already-mentioned-saying. Know indeed! It is the sitting-Buddha that the buddhas and the patriarchs has had as the essential-instrument. Those who have already been called the buddhas and the patriarchs have used this essential-instrument. Those who have not [used this] have never seen it even in dreams.

The fact that the Buddha-Dharma has been transmitted in India and China means that the sitting-Buddha has certainly been transmitted. It is because [the sitting-Buddha is] the essential-instrument. Unless the Buddha-Dharma has been transmitted, sitting-meditation has never been transmitted. What has been correctly transmitted from master to disciple is the principle of only this sitting-meditation. Those who have not singly transmitted this principle yet are not the Buddha and Patriarchs. Unless this one dharma becomes clear, ten thousand dharmas do not become clear, nor do ten thousand practices become clear. Unless one makes clear each and every dharma, one is not called [a person of] clear-eye, nor does one attain the way. How could one be the Buddha or the Patriarch of present and past? Because of this, it should be firmly settled that the Buddha and Patriarchs without fail have singly transmitted sitting-meditation.

What it means by being illuminated by the light of the Buddha and Patriarchs is to practice and investigate this sitting-meditation. Foolish fellows by mistake think the Buddha's light is like the light of the sun and the moon and like the radiance of gem and flame. Radiance of the sun and the moon is the mode of karma in rebirth in the six realms. It cannot be compared with the Buddha's light. The Buddha's light means receiving, retaining and hearing one phrase, maintaining, trusting, protecting, and retaining one dharma, and singly transmitting sitting-meditation. Without being illuminated by the light, there is no maintenance-trust, nor any entrustment-acceptance.

Because of this, there are only a few who know sitting-meditation as sitting-meditation, even from time immemorial. Among chief priests of great temples at various mountains in great Sung today, there are many who do not know sitting-meditation, nor learn. Though there are some who have attained clarity and known, they are few. The occasions of sitting-meditation have been, needless to say, settled. Chief priests as well as monks together make sitting-meditation the essential duty. In convincing learners, they recommend sitting-meditation to them. However, chief priests who know are rare. Therefore, although, from past to present, there were a few high priests who wrote the *Zazen-meï*, and there were a few high priests who composed the *Zazen-gi*, and there were a few high priests who wrote the *Zazen-shin*, [these works] as well as the *Zazen-meï* are of no account, and as for the *Zazen-gi* its actual practice is dubious. They do not know sitting-meditation. [These works] were written by fellows who did not singly transmit sitting-meditation. They are "Zazen-shin" in the *Keiteki-dentôroku*, "Zazen-meï" in the *Katai-futôroku*, etc.

It is pitiful—even if one has spent one's life visiting temples all around, one has not practiced [even] one sitting. The very-sitting does not become a part of the self. Furthermore, practice and the self do not meet each other. This is not because sitting-meditation dislikes one's body and mind, but because one is deluded and drunken in confusion without having any intention to the true practice. Their compilations only indicate returning to the source and turning to the origin, and [only expound] the business of meaninglessly ceasing thought and concentrating quietly. They do not even amount to the ranking of practice on [Tendai's gradual teaching of] seeing-refining-acquiring-practicing, or amount to the doctrine [which

teaches the gradual step of] the ten stages and bodhisattva enlightenment. How could they singly transmit the sitting-meditation of the Buddha and Patriarchs! Records of the Sung dynasty were wrong to have written them down. Late learners should discard and never pay any attention to them.

As for the *Zazen-shin*, the one that the Zen master Wanshi Shōkaku of Tendō-Keitoku-ji temple composed is only [the work of] the Buddha and Patriarchs—“admonition concerning sitting-meditation.” It has stated matters correctly. This alone is the light which [illuminates] the front and back of the Dharma world. He is the Buddhist Patriarch among the Buddhist Patriarchs of past and today. The prior buddhas and the later buddhas continue to be admonished by this *Zazen-shin*, and the current patriarchs and ancient patriarchs become present from this *Zazen-shin*. That *Zazen-shin* is as follows:

*Zazen-shin*      Composed by the Zen master Wanshi Shōkaku (name given by the Imperial Court)

*The Buddhas’ essential-instrument,  
The Patriarchs’ instrumental-essence.  
Without touching things, yet sensing,  
Without confronting the object. yet illuminating.*

*Without touching things, yet sensing,  
This sensing is subtle itself.  
Without confronting the object. yet illuminating,  
This illumination is profound itself.*

*This sensing is subtle itself,  
There has been no thought of distinction.  
This illumination is profound itself,  
There has been no sign of even a hair.*

*There has been no thought of distinction,  
This sensing is peerless and mysterious.  
There has been no sign of even a hair,  
This illumination is un-graspable and is grasped.*

*The water is clean through to the bottom,  
Fish are swimming unhurriedly.  
The sky is extensive and unbound,  
Birds are flying away, far away.*

What *shin* (admonition) of *zazen-shin* refers to is that the great working manifests before us, and it is the dignified manner beyond sound and form and is a knot before our parents were born. It is good not to slander the Buddha and Patriarchs. It still does not escape from losing one’s body and mind. It is a head with a length of 3 *shaku* (about 3 feet) and a chin with 2 *sun* (about 2.2 inches).

“*The Buddhas’ essential-instrument*”:

*The Buddhas* always see *the Buddhas* as the essential-instrument and the manifestation of this essential-instrument is sitting-meditation.

“*The Patriarchs’ instrumental-essence*”:

The late master did without these words, and this principle is *the Patriarchs*. [Without words] Dharma has been transmitted, so has the robe. Each face, as one turns one's head one's face turns, is the Buddha's essential-instrument. Each head, as one turns one's face one's head turns, is the Patriarchs' instrumental-essence.

*“Without touching things, yet sensing”:*

*Sensing* is not perceiving-sensing. Perceiving-sensing is a small quantity. [*Sensing*] is not sensing of comprehending-sensing. Comprehending-sensing is creating-working. For this reason, *sensing* is *without touching things*, and *without touching things* is *sensing*. [But] we should not understand it as universal-sensing, nor should we qualify it as self-sensing. This *without touching things* is “to act with one's head clear when one's head becomes clear, and to act with one's head becomes confused when one's head becomes confused.” Sitting breaks the skin that our mothers brought forth.

*“Without confronting the object, yet illuminating”:*

This *illuminating* is not the illumination of illuminating-comprehension or spiritual illumination. *Without confronting the object* is referred to as *illuminating*. Illumination does not manifest into the object, since the object itself is illumination. *Without confronting* means that the whole-world has never been hidden, and that the ripped-world has never disclosed its head. It is subtle and profound, which is related to each other and not-related to each other.

*“This sensing is subtle itself; There has been no thought of distinction”:*

*Thought* is *sensing*, and it is not necessarily reliant on other source. This *sensing* is form, and form is mountains and rivers. These mountains and rivers are *subtle*, and this *subtlety* is *profound*. When we use it, we find it lively. In our making/becoming a dragon [as we are in sitting-meditation], we are not concerned with whether it is [a carp when it is] in the lower reaches of the Wu-men rapids or whether it is [a dragon when it is] in the upper reaches. If we merely use this single *sensing*, then we draw near the whole-world and mountains and rivers, and sense them with our whole-might. Without our sensing in our becoming intimate with mountains and rivers, there can not be a single sensing or half-realization. We should not lament over *distinguishing thought* arriving late. Buddhas that have already gone through distinction have already manifested totally. Ever-none is already-ever and already-ever is manifestation. Namely, the ever-none-distinction is not-to-meet-a-single-person.

*“This illumination is profound itself; There has been no sign of even a hair”:*

*Even a hair* is the whole-world. Therefore, it is profound itself, illuminating itself. For this reason, it is as if it were never brought about before. Do not doubt the eyes, nor trust the ears. “One should immediately clarify the principle beyond the meaning. One should not seek a law in words.” This is what illumination is about. For this reason, it is non-comparative. For this reason, it is non-grasping. Although I have come to maintain it as mysterious and come to maintain and trust it as grasping, I instead question all the more.

*“The water is clean through to the bottom; Fish are swimming unhurriedly”:*

What it means by *the water is clean* is that water suspended in the sky is not clean *through to the bottom*, much less is water that is clear in the vessel world, which is not the water of *the water is clean*. That which has no bound of the shore edge is *the water that is clean through to the bottom*. If fish go in this water, it is not that there is no swimming: No matter how much distance swimming takes place, this is un-measurable, un-limited. There is no shore for measuring, no sky for floating, or no bottom for sinking. Therefore, there is no one who can measure it. If we try to discuss measuring, there is only *the water clean through to the bottom*. The virtue of sitting-meditation is like this swimming of fish. Who can measure a distance of a thousand or ten thousand? The course of *through to the bottom* is the whole body not going (flying/swimming) through the way of birds.

“*The sky is extensive and unbound; Birds are flying away, far away*”:

What it means by *the sky is extensive* is not that it is suspended in the heaven. The sky which is suspended in the heaven is not *the extensive sky*, much less whatever is suspended in here and there, that is not *the extensive sky*. That which has no front-or-back regardless of hidden or revealed is *the extensive sky*. When birds fly in this sky, flying in the sky is one Dharma way. The action of flying the sky cannot be measured. The flying the sky is the whole world, since the whole world is the flying the sky. Although this flying is not known how far it can go, in stating it with words that are other than measuring, it is referred to as *flying away, far away*. That is “one should immediately leave without a thread under one’s feet.” When the sky flies away, the birds also fly away. When the birds fly away, the sky also flies away. It is said in a saying of investigating flying away that it is only at this very place. This is admonition of the solemn-solemn-state. Thousands and thousands of distances are telling us, “It is only at this very place.”

The *Zazen-shin* of the Zen master Wanshi is like this. Among successive elders, there has never been a *Zazen-shin* like this one. Ordinary monks everywhere, though they try to attain like this *Zazen-shin*, cannot get it even if they exert their energies of one life or two lives. We cannot find its like through all directions today. There is only this singular admonition.

When my late Teacher preached in the Dharma Hall, he used to say, “Wanshi is the permanent Buddha.” He had never said this in referring to other people. When we have eye to know a person, we can know the sound of the Buddha and Patriarchs. We have known indeed that there are the Buddha and Patriarchs in Tōzan. It has been eighty-some years or so after the Zen master Wanshi. Contemplating on his *Zazen-shin*, I have written the following *Zazen-shin*. Today is the 18th day of the 3rd lunar month in the 3rd year of Ninji (1243). Counting the events from this year to the 8th day of the 10th month in the 27th year of Shōkō (1159), we have only eighty-five years. The *Zazen-shin* that I have written is this:

### **Zazen-shin**

The Buddhas’ essential-instrument,  
 The Patriarchs’ instrumental-essence.  
 Not-thinking, yet manifesting,  
 Not-relating to each other, yet becoming.

Not-thinking, yet manifesting,  
 This manifestation is itself intimate.  
 Not-relating to each other, yet becoming,  
 This becoming is itself authenticating.

This manifestation is itself intimate,  
 There has been no stain.  
 This becoming is itself authenticating,  
 There has been no rightness or inclination.

There has been no stain of the intimacy,  
 This intimacy is without entrusting, yet casting off.  
 There has been no rightness or inclination in the authentication,  
 This authentication is without calculation, yet practicing.

The water is clean through to the bottom,

Fish are swimming just like fish.  
The sky is extensive through to the heaven,  
Birds are flying just like birds.

It is not that the *Zazen-shin* by the Zen master Wanshi has never been said enough, but it should be expressed like this. It is a matter of great importance that those who are descendants of the Buddha and Patriarchs should learn in practice sitting-meditation. This is the right seal of single transmission.

Recorded at Kôshô-hôrin-ji temple in the 18th day of the 3rd lunar month of Ninji (1242).

Addressed to monks at Kippô-shôja of Yoshida in Echizen Province, in the 11th lunar month of the 4th year of Ninji (1243).